

REPORT FROM THE
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION

July 10, 2007



Objectives:

- The Subcommittee was formed and asked to review and report from a Planning and Zoning perspective if there is/are areas of town that might best meet the needs of affordable housing development to comply with State Statute 8-30g and what, if any zone changes might be needed to facilitate appropriate affordable housing development.

Objectives (continued):

- Any affordable housing must be harmonious with the character of the Town.
- Housing should also have the least impacts relative to existing developed areas.
- 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development and other information considered in preparing this report.

Assumptions:

- The Town currently has in the range of 150-200 affordable units.
- Achieving the State's 10% objective is unlikely and/or extremely difficult due to the built-out nature of Darien.
- If strategic efforts are coordinated, a moratorium under CGS Section 8-30g *may* be achievable.
- Progress could be made by considering the limited number of properties.

Planning (Location) Criteria:

1. Access to public water and sewer services;
2. Little or no impact on existing single-family residential neighborhoods;
3. Where higher density housing now exists;
4. On or near collector or arterial roads;
5. Near the two train stations and/or near bus lines;
6. Near services and shopping.

Potential Development Areas:

- A map was created based upon a number of criteria.
- The 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development was used as a guide/roadmap.
- “Darien remains primarily a single-family residential community”.
- The map is a “macro view”, and does not consider any specific site constraints (wetlands, steep slopes, sight lines, etc.).

Conclusions from the Map:

- There are now a minimal number of sites to make significant headway under Section 8-30g.
- Largest properties give the biggest “bang for the buck” toward achieving either a moratorium or meeting the objective of Section 8-30g.
- Any sites require rezoning and/or a concerted Town commitment regarding timely and appropriate funding and development.

Conclusions from the Map (continued):

- Based upon the chart of identified sites, a high priority should be placed on the Allen O'Neill properties, which can minimally accommodate 20-60 more units than now exist. (The Housing Authority is now beginning the redevelopment process). Other priority will include other Town-controlled parcels.
- Also, based on the chart of the "Largest Identified Sites", all other locations will require considerable, creative and coordinated effort by multiple Town Commissions, agencies, and townspeople if they are to be developed for affordable housing.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

- Modifications to the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation and Development and/or zoning regulation amendments to implement these ideas.
- Establish benchmark criteria that best harmonizes any affordable housing development with existing zoning. Such criteria need to encourage the creation of affordable housing. A “zoning template” for such housing would be needed.

Conclusions & Recommendations (continued):

- The Planning & Zoning Commission should re-evaluate the three existing zoning districts, and consider appropriate rezoning or developing an overlay zone that would facilitate affordable housing should some of the properties listed herein be considered for development.
- The subcommittee believes that the Town needs to balance the need for affordable housing with other needs of the community -- residential and commercial.

Conclusions & Recommendations (continued):

- Commence a comprehensive review of zoning regulation amendments relative to affordable housing.
- Mixed use development in commercial zones -- while not “the” answer -- also needs to be considered as a contributing source of inventory to meet the objectives of 8-30g.
- Planning & Zoning should consider what potential incentives are both prudent and will best support the affordable housing initiative. These could include the provision that in certain commercial zones (such as the CBD and/or DC Zones) allow third floor housing as a permitted use as-of-right or as a Special Permit use.

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The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several sets of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water, rendered in a slightly lighter shade of blue. These circles are of varying sizes and are positioned in a way that they appear to be emanating from different points, creating a sense of movement and depth.